RELIGION AND GLOBAL POLITICS

Theocratic Secularism

Religion and Government in Shi'i Thought

NASER GHOBADZADEH

Theocratic Secularism

RELIGION AND GLOBAL POLITICS

SERIES EDITOR
John L. Esposito
University Professor and Director
Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding
Georgetown University

ISLAMIC LEVIATHAN
Islam and the Making of State Power
Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr

RACHID GHANNOUCHI
A Democrat within Islamism
Azzam S. Tamimi

BALKAN IDOLS
Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States
Vjekoslav Perica

ISLAMIC POLITICAL IDENTITY IN TURKEY
M. Hakan Yavuz

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA
Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu

PIETY AND POLITICS
Islamism in Contemporary Malaysia
Joseph Chinyong Liow

TERROR IN THE LAND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
Guatemala under General Efrain Rios Montt, 1982–1983
Virginia Garrard-Burnett

IN THE HOUSE OF WAR
Dutch Islam Observed
Sam Cherribi

BEING YOUNG AND MUSLIM
New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North
Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera

CHURCH, STATE, AND DEMOCRACY IN EXPANDING EUROPE
Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu

THE HEADSCARF CONTROVERSY
Secularism and Freedom of Religion
Hilal Elver

THE HOUSE OF SERVICE
The Gülen Movement and Islam's Third Way
David Tittensor

ANSWERING THE CALL
Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt
Abdullah Al-Arian

MAPPING THE LEGAL BOUNDARIES OF BELONGING
Religion and Multiculturalism from Israel to Canada
Edited by René Provost

RELIGIOUS SECULARITY
A Theological Challenge to the Islamic State
Naser Ghobadzadeh

THE MIDDLE PATH OF MODERATION IN ISLAM
The Qurʾānic Principle of Wasaṭiyyah
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

ONE ISLAM, MANY MUSLIM WORLDS
Spirituality, Identity, and Resistance across Islamic Lands
Raymond William Baker

CONTAINING BALKAN NATIONALISM
Imperial Russia and Ottoman Christians (1856–1914)
Denis Vovchenko

INSIDE THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD
Religion, Identity, and Politics
Khalil al-Anani

POLITICIZING ISLAM
The Islamic Revival in France and India
Z. Fareen Parvez

SOVIET AND MUSLIM
The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia
Eren Tasar

ISLAM IN MALAYSIA
An Entwined History
Khairudin Aljunied

SALAFISM GOES GLOBAL
From the Gulf to the French Banlieues
Mohamed-Ali Adraoui

JIHADISM IN EUROPE
European Youth and the New Caliphate
Farhad Khosrokhavar

ISLAM AND NATIONHOOD IN MODERN GREECE
Stefanos Katsikas

WAHHABISM AND THE WORLD
Understanding Saudi Arabia's Global Influence on Islam
Peter Mandaville

POLITICIZING ISLAM
The Islamic Revival in France and India
Z. Fareen Parvez

THEOCRATIC SECULARISM
Religion and Government in Shīʿi Thought
Naser Ghobadzadeh

Theocratic Secularism

Religion and Government in Shīʿi Thought

NASER GHOBADZADEH

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

© Oxford University Press 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by license, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reproduction rights organization. Inquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Qubādzādah, Nāṣir, author.
Title: Theocratic Secularism: Religion and Government in Shīʿi Thought / Naser Ghobadzadeh.
Description: 1. | New York City : Oxford University Press, 2023. |
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2022027444 (print) | LCCN 2022027445 (ebook) |
ISBN 9780197606797 (hardback) | ISBN 9780197606810 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: Shīʾah—Political aspects. | Shīʾah—History. |
Islam and politics—History.
Classification: LCC BP194.185 .Q834 2022 (print) | LCC BP194.185 (ebook) |
DDC 297.2/72—dc23/eng/20220622
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022027444
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022027445

DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780197606797.001.0001

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed by Integrated Books International, United States of America

For Bita

Contents

Acknowledgments xi

Introduction 1
- Formative Centuries of Shīʿism 2
- An Unattainable Theocracy 7
- The Iranian Revolution and Ecclesial Transformation? 10
- The Necessity and Importance of Theocratic Secularism 15
- An Attenuated Notion of Political Secularism 19
- Separation of Religious and Political Authority 22
- Some Caveats 27

PART I. THE FORMATIVE PERIOD OF SHĪʿISM

1. The Sorrowful Age of Presence 33
   - Political Leadership and Salvation 36
   - Claims to the Caliphate 38
   - Eschewing Politics 42
   - Scholarly Pursuits 43
   - Organizational Development 45
   - A Symbolic Role 46
   - Little Information and Even Less Political Involvement 48
2. The Minor Occultation: Collaboration and Survival 53
   - The Political Aura of the Minor Occultation 55
   - Infallible Imāms and Collaboration with Caliphs 59
   - Shīʿī Families in the Caliphate Apparatus 61
   - The Four Deputies (Nawāb Arbaʿa) 63
   - The Representative Organization (Wikāla) 65
   - "Othering" Rivals: The Case of Jaʿfar's Claim to the Imāmate 69
   - Non-messianic Notion of the Savior 74
   - Discourse of Pragmatism and Survival 77
   - Elimination of Rivals 78
3. The Age of Perplexity: From Moderate Shīʿism to Twelver Shīʿism 87
   - Epistemic Transformation 88
   - Transformed Premises 91
   - ʿUlamāʾ in the Early Centuries 94
   - Dominance of Ḥadīth 96

Formation of Shīʿī Ḥadīth Collections 98
Discourse Formation through Ḥadīth Compilation 101
Appropriating from Competing Sects 104
Modifications to the Imāmate 106

4. The Major Occultation: The ʿUlamāʾ and Interaction with the Usurper 117
The Authority of the ʿUlamāʾ 118
Limited and Decentralized Authority 122
Just and Legitimate Ruler 125
Cooperation with a Usurper 128
Baghdad and Qum Schools of Thought 129
Būyids and Shīʿī Leaders 134
Rebellion against the Usurper 138
Shīʿism: A Religion of Resistance? 141

PART II. THE CONTINGENT RISE OF GOVERNMENTAL SHĪʿISM

5. The Political Germination of a Religious Doctrine 149
The Doctrine of Wilāyat-i Faqīh: A Clean Break 150
Rational Kernel of a Religious Doctrine 153
The Sociopolitical Aspects of the Sharīʿa 156
The Populist Approach of Khomeini 164
Reception in the Seminary 166

6. Wilāyat-i Faqīh: The Elephant in the Room 171
Religion during the Revolutionary Struggle 172
The Interviews of Khomeini 179
"Islamic Republic": An Empty Signifier 181
The Draft Constitution 186

7. The Creeping Entrance of the Idea of Wilāyat-i Faqīh 193
Referendum or Constituent Assembly? 194
The Creeping Entrance 198
The Faqīh at the Head of the State Apparatus 202
The Silence of Prominent Clerical Islamist Leaders 204
Complete Absence of the Doctrine of Wilāyat-i Faqīh 206
Lack of Cohesion and Coordination among Islamists 211

8. The Genie Is Out of the Bottle 215
The Islamists' Conquest of the Assembly of Experts 216
The Mystical Character of Khomeini 217
Khomeini and the Assembly of Experts Election 219
Fear That the Nightmare of Constitutionalism Would Recur 221

Underestimation of the Clerical Islamists 225
The Assembly of Experts and the Tyranny of the Majority 228
The Great Absentees from the Assembly of Experts 231
Avoidance of Theological Debate 233
Disunity of Opponents and Cohesion of Supporters 238

Conclusion 245
Secularism Embedded in Theology 246
Governmental Shīʿism 248
The Cold War against Shīʿī Orthodoxy 249

Bibliography 255
Index 295

Acknowledgments

The idea for this book came to me when I was working at the Australian Catholic University's Institute for Social Justice. Specifically, I was inspired by one of Rajeev Bhargava's lectures there about the concept of "principled distance," and it was this notion that led me to formulate a concept to describe the political approach of the traditional Shīʿī orthodoxy. Rajeev also provided me with constructive feedback on the original book proposal during several extended personal conversations, for which I am immensely grateful. I would also like to express my appreciation for the parts that all my colleagues at ISJ played, in one way or another, in the initial formation of this project. Fortunately, the Institute was small, and I can name them all here: Nikolas Kompridis, Emilian Kavalski, Allison Weir, Kiran Grewal, Ali Mamouri, Mahmoud Pargoo, Morteza Bahrani, Magdalena Zolkos, Paula Gleeson, Romand Coles, Lia Haro, and Lisa Tarantino. In addition to the permanent members of the Institute, every year a number of professorial fellows came to spend some time at ISJ. They also contributed to shaping the first book proposal, and I am especially thankful to Akeel Bilgrami, Joseph Carens, Jennifer Nedelsky, and Linda Martín Alcoff.

I also thank my many colleagues at ACU for their collegial and intellectual support, including Mark Chuo, Rachel Busbridge, Wayne McKenna, Tim McKenry, Noah Risman, Lorinda Cramer, Jack Barbalet, Xiaoying Qi, Paul Chalkley, Ellen Warne, Jan Seruga, James McLaren, Cara Taber, Yvonne Hajduk, Joanne Ling, and Kely Kirwan. Thank you also to my former supervisors Lily Rahim and John Keane, as well as Shahram Akbarzadeh, who have helped me in various ways over the years and have always been generous with their time whenever I have sought guidance and advice. I am deeply indebted to the editor of the Religion and Global Politics series at Oxford University Press, John Esposito, whose support and trust in my work have played a significant role in creating academic opportunities for me. Thanks also to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments and to all at Oxford University Press for their professionalism in ensuring that this project reached completion.

Over the past few years in which I have been writing this book, I have also benefited from the opinions of friends expressed in informal settings. It is difficult to remember the names of all the people I have spoken to about this project, but those whose names come to mind now are Nasim Janfada, Farzaneh Arabi, Judith Betts, Steve Curran, Heydar Shadi, Alam Saleh, Yaser Mirdamadi, Minoo Mirshahvalad, Salman Panahi, Araz Aminnaseri, Zoheir Mirkarimi, Larbi

Sadiki, Benjamin Goldsmith, Nicolas Pirsoul, Ali Akbar, James Barry, and Arash Ghassemi.

I am fortunate to have dear friends whose presence in my life has always enriched my thinking as well as my mental health. Although I have not spoken to all my friends about this book and its arguments directly, my discussions with these individuals about things that really matter and the dialogue I have shared with them have not only enriched my thoughts and ideas but also taught me a lot on a personal level. There is a long list of friends in this group, but if am only to mention some of them, these names come to mind: Khosraw Milani, Fereshteh Milani, Babak Ghazanfri, Samaneh Kalayeh, Ehsan Tabatabaei, Amir Hadji, Arman Tajbakhsh, Arezoo Houshmand, Sina Hassanli, Sarah Khosrwnejad, Amir Hakimian, Amiraslam Fila, Naghme Yousefi, Mehdi Taheri, Hossein Zamani, Neda Yousefi, Atousa Montaseri, M. Reza Alinaghizadeh, Mahmoud Karimi Azar Daryany, Mahsa Shahidi, Ayat Tadjalli, Abolfazl Masoumi, Ramona Salehi, Negar Asaidan, Saviz Gharavi, Arash Hajilou, Haydar Kasravi, Sahar Paydavousi, Hamid Ashouri, Hoda Barazandeh, Nima Emami, Amir Hossein Kaveh, Flor Sedighi, Mehdi Nejitehrani, Behzad Nasirpour, Saloumeh Farahani, Fatemeh Sarafraz, Sam Barnett, Mohammad Aghazadeh, Samaneh Khedmatloo and Stephen Mills.

I must also thank my family and my wife's family separately here. Every one of them has been beside me and played a determining role, not only in the writing of this book but in every achievement of my life. I would mention in particular my late father, Ja'afar, whose memory is always with me; my mother, Azizah Aghamalizadeh, to whose efforts I am perpetually indebted; my brothers, especially Fazel, Mehdi, and Siavash; and Nafiseh Mosayebi and Behnaz Ekhtiari, who made direct contributions to the preparation of this manuscript.

English is not my mother tongue, and I have benefited from the assistance of others to finalize this work in the English language. Some of those who have edited and proofread parts of this book include Estelle Dryland, Henno Kotze, Melissa Seelye, and Janice Webster. Janice's role extended beyond help with language; she generously offered many constructive suggestions, not only about the writing but also about the content of the book, for which I am very grateful. Without Janice's help, the final manuscript would not have reached the same standard.

I would like to mention my closest friend, Mohammad Fayyazi, and thank him individually. Mohammad has accompanied me throughout my adult life in all my academic and non-academic endeavors. Time and time again, when I was stuck developing an argument for this book, despite the time difference, Mohammad generously made time to speak with me and offer constructive suggestions that illuminated the way forward. The Arabic texts I have used in this book were translated with Mohammad's help. In addition, Mohammad

consistently provided valuable assistance in this project, such as by obtaining non-English resources, among other contributions.

Last but not least, I thank my wife, Bita Ekhtiari, who has for nearly twenty-five years accompanied me in my life and work. She has tolerated my many shortcomings and drawn on her many strengths to assist me in all my endeavors. Much of the manuscript was written during Melbourne's long pandemic lockdown period, during which Bita was the only person by my side, with me almost constantly. Her presence is embedded in the pages of this book. By dedicating this book to Bita, I express my appreciation for her presence beside me.

Introduction

By coining the notion of *theocratic secularism*, this book suggests that Twelver Shiʿism embodies a religious rationale for political secularism. It establishes that belief in a pure and unattainable theocracy is the cornerstone of Twelver Shīʿī Islam.[1] The divine right to both political and religious sovereignty is bestowed exclusively upon Prophet Mohammad and the twelve infallible Imāms, the last of whom went into hiding in the third/ninth century and is believed to be still alive today. The position of rulership is preserved for him; thus, whoever assumes the position of rulership is considered a usurper, that is, one who violates the exclusive right of the hidden Imām. Accordingly, Shiʿī religious authorities are religiously prohibited from seizing the state apparatus. This claim will appear controversial considering that forty-three years ago, Ayatollah Khomeini, who held the highest rank in the Shīʿī religious hierarchy of marjaʿiyyat, led a revolution against the Pahlavi government and established a faqīh-headed political system purporting to be the representative of the twelfth Imām. Khomeini's doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh[2] holds that the authority that the Prophet and the infallible Imāms held in government affairs extends to the jurisprudent.[3]

Thus, one may contend that Shīʿī Islam gave birth to one of the most theocratic states of the contemporary world, the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is the only typical state[4] in which the conflation of religion with the state is comprehensive. In line with Rajeev Bhargava's conception,[5] one could suggest that in Iran, state and religion are fused at all three levels: (1) the ruling clergy claims that the state is a tool to achieve the end goals of religion, (2) all legislation and

[1] There are other branches of Shīʿī Islam, but the discussion in this book centers only on Twelver Shīʿa. The simplified form Shīʿa, and associated words including Shīʿism and Shīʿī, will be used throughout this book. Whenever there is reference to another branch of Shīʿī Islam, the branch name will be used.

[2] The concept of wilāyat-i faqīh has been used to mean different things and elaborated in various ways by Shīʿī scholars throughout history. In this book, I use the term "doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh" to refer specifically to the particular elaboration put forward by Khomeini.

[3] Khomeini 1984, 467.

[4] Technically speaking, Vatican City, Athonite State, and the Central Tibetan Administration (in exile) are three independent theocratic states. But apropos of structure, it might be problematic to categorize them as typical nation-states. The Islamic Republic of Iran governs a population of more than 80 million people and outwardly possesses all the prerequisites of a typical nation-state.

[5] Bhargava 2009.

Theocratic Secularism. Naser Ghobadzadeh, Oxford University Press. © Oxford University Press 2023.
DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780197606797.003.0001

public policies must comply with religious teachings,[6] and (3) at the personal/institutional levels, not only is the head of state a jurist, but clerics are extensively engaged in the affairs of governance. I deem it of little importance to elaborate on why this Shīʿī stream, labeled "governmental Shīʿism" in this book, has received disproportionate attention not only in the media but also in academic circles. What is important here is that this attention has highlighted the degree to which a long-lasting Shīʿī tradition, labeled in this book "Shīʿī orthodoxy," has been neglected and misunderstood. In order to fill this gap in the relevant literature, this book probes into the formative period of Shīʿism and shows the evolution and consolidation of theocratic secularism in the heart of Shīʿī political theology. At the same time, it is argued that the formation of a faqīh-headed state in Iran after the 1979 Revolution was the product of neither a transformation of this political theology nor a change in the Shīʿī belief system.

Formative Centuries of Shīʿism

The period spanning from the death of Prophet Mohammad to the fifth/eleventh century constituted Shīʿism's formative period. Available sources reveal that at the end of this period, defining features of Shīʿism included (a) a limitation on the number of infallible Imāms to twelve, (b) a belief in the infallibility and sacredness of the Imāms' politico-religious authority, and (c), perhaps most important, the messianic exegesis of the twelfth Imām, which was articulated, crystallized, and agreed upon by community leaders and the masses alike. Shīʿism emerged as an independent entity based on an amalgamation of a retrospective reading of Islamic history, the configuration of a distinctive jurisprudential school of thought, and the combining of a set of rituals and spaces (holy sites). In Shīʿī thinking, this formative period is depicted as the unfolding of a prophecy, or divine will. Retrospectively, Shīʿī sources claim that the Shīʿī belief system had definite perimeters and features from the start, even when the Prophet was alive. For example, while the available evidence clearly shows that the number of infallible Imāms was agreed upon later and there is no mention of the number twelve until the fourth/tenth century,[7] some Shīʿī sources claim that the Prophet himself mentioned the names of the twelve infallible Imāms.[8] Despite their extremely controversial nature, these types of claims not only are

[6] It should be noted that in practice, the ruling clergy has proven rather flexible in complying with religious teachings. At times, they have sacrificed Islamic principles in favor of political considerations. For detailed discussion, see Ghobadzadeh 2015, 73–84; Tamadonfar 2001.

[7] Kohlberg 1976; Kohlberg 2000; Modarressi 1993, 100–105; Halm 2004, 38–44.

[8] There are many Shīʿī ḥadīths in this regard. One example is known as the ḥadīth of al-Lawh (tablet), which is detailed here in n. 42 of chapter 3.

a part of the written tradition of Shīʿism but also play a decisive role in how the masses conceive of their own heritage. These assertions are grounded in a belief in transcendental authority.

In adopting methodological agnosticism in this book as my philosophical and epistemological platform from which to approach this study, the existence of supernatural phenomena is not necessarily denied. However, investigation on a naturalistic basis is required. The chosen approach aims to remain neutral regarding metaphysical and supernatural claims and to investigate religious beliefs, concepts, and institutions as human and social constructs.[9] Thus, I do not ascribe any weight to either divine will or authority, which are powerful factors in intra-religious explanations. I investigate Twelver Shīʿism as a discourse that was born out of the lived experience of the Shīʿī community over the early centuries of Islamic history. More specifically, Foucauldian discourse analysis is employed to scrutinize the formative period of Shīʿism in the first part of this book. R. Diaz-Bone et al. argue that discourses should be theorized not as a continuous unfolding of an a priori existing entity but rather as processes characterized by discontinuity and rupture.[10] It is suggested here that the theological foundation of Twelver Shīʿism did not exist in a predetermined form, and members of the early Shīʿī community did not pursue the implementation of a predesigned blueprint. Rather, the defining features of Twelver Shīʿism, such as the fixing of the number of infallible Imāms at twelve and the messianic character of the twelfth Imām, were missing from the first four centuries of Shīʿī history and were only developed and conceptualized later.

It is also important to mention that messianic Shīʿī political theology did not emerge at a certain moment in history, and therefore, it cannot be attributed to a single consciousness or to any specific intention or event. Rather, it matured over time through a process of discourse formation, that is, through dialectical engagement with the mainstream Muslim community (later to become known as the Sunnī)[11] and its proximate contemporaries at that time.[12] Scrutinizing Christianity as a discursive entity, William Arnal asserts that the

[9] Berger 1969, 69; Blum 2011; Bell and Taylor 2014; Porpora 2006.

[10] Diaz-Bone et al. 2008, 13.

[11] The Sunnī, as an autonomous and identifiable community, was a later phenomenon that, according to Lucas, formed in the third–fourth/ninth–tenth centuries. Initially, it included all of those who refused to form separatist communities. For a detailed discussion, see Lucas 2008; Crone 2005, 28–29.

[12] There were many Shīʿī groups during the formative period, but only a few survived, and the majority came to be extinguished over time. The former united and became known as Imāmī Shīʿa. Twelver Shīʿism, which emerged as the triumphant sect, managed not only to survive but also to become the mainstream Shīʿī denomination. Among the more important of the other sects were the Ġulāt, Kaysāniyya, Zaydī, Ismāʿīliyya, Afṭaḥiyya, Wāqifiyya, and Qaṭʿiyya, to name but a few. Newman asserts that contemporary heresiographic works imply the existence of between fourteen and twenty different Shīʿī groups in the early fourth/tenth century (Newman 2000, 14–15).

creation of Christianity occurred throughout the second century. This creation, he maintains, "represents an invention of the tradition and identity itself, through, among other techniques, the confiscation of characters, events, and writings, that previously had not been thought of either as a unity or in terms of the identity with which they came to be associated."[13] A similar approach to the study of Shīʿism reveals the retrospective creation of meaning in histories culled over centuries and the ways in which collectively recovered memories are reconstructed and interpreted by different actors.

This "regime of truth." to use the Foucault term, was marked by considerable political upheaval and defensive maneuvering carried out by the Shīʿī leadership circle. Deconstructing Shīʿism as a "regime of truth" will require genealogical inquiry into early Islamic history, a period during which a variety of identity formation discourses were engaged in existential struggles. The interrogation of the Shīʿī discourse formation process in its historical context will invite questions such as how exactly the discourse was constructed and what processes shaped its construction. How, when, by which agent(s), and within what interplay of power relations did its various aspects evolve? Furthermore, the questions of which logic and systems of knowledge were employed in its creation, what exigencies and/or strategic goals were at play, and what sets of terminology and notions were established or rearticulated during the discursive construction of Shīʿism will be explored. Probing alternative discourses that were either eliminated or concealed is also an essential component of Foucauldian discourse analysis. As Michel Foucault asserts:

> We have to dig deeply to show how things have been historically contingent, for such and such a reason intelligible but not necessary. We must make the intelligible appear against a background of emptiness, and deny its necessity. We must think that what exists is far from filling all possible spaces.[14]

Accordingly, it is also imperative to pose another set of questions: Which interests were mobilized and served by this discourse formation in Shīʿī history, and which interests were sidelined? How and why were certain categories of thinking and lines of argument generally accepted as truth, while others were rejected? What evidence was used in the process of discourse formation, and what was omitted? Finally, which elements were excluded, and which were combined to construct the manifestation of Shīʿī doctrine and identity known as Twelver Shīʿism?

[13] Arnal 2011, 212.
[14] Foucault 1994b, 139.

A major factor contributing to the triumph of the discourse of the Twelver Shīʿism was its unerring practice of "othering." From the Foucauldian perspective of discourse analysis, discourses are not seen as innocent and impartial explanations of the world and its history.[15] Instead, a purposeful process of "othering" is part of the identity formation of the pertinent discourse. Regarding Twelver Shīʿī discourse formation, othering occurred constantly and extensively, alienating and antagonizing influential individuals and sizable segments of the community. For this reason, in the early centuries of Islamic history, proto-Imāmī/Twelver Shīʿism was constantly diminished, a phenomenon that urges one to ponder the reasons for its later widespread acceptance and triumph over other discourses. In their writings, Shīʿī scholars[16] frequently contend that the political modi operandi of the infallible Imāms were guided by the principle of maintaining the purity of the right path. The tactics they employed, including drawing up boundaries to differentiate themselves from allegedly deviated sects and outlining the perimeters of the authentic Shīʿī pathway, have been quoted repeatedly by those defending the infallible Imāms' political inaction.[17]

This narration of the political conduct of the infallible Imāms was developed retrospectively and proficiently, the aim being to exclude many of the individuals, groups, and events that, at that time, were considered part of the mainstream Shīʿī community. At times, non-Twelver Shīʿī groups were stronger and considerably more influential than the branch that later coalesced as Twelver Shīʿism. Expelling "others," Twelver Shīʿism mapped out a narrow orbit and trajectory as the only true and authentic religion and declared the others external to authentic Shīʿism. In this process, as will be discussed in chapter 3, they appropriated important elements from other sects. In particular, the messianic conception of the twelfth Imām incorporated key elements of earlier messianic conceptualizations that were formulated within the Shīʿī tradition throughout the first centuries of Islamic history. The moderate Shīʿism[18] that later took up

[15] Diaz-Bone et al. 2008.

[16] In this book, I use the terms "scholars," "thinkers," "ʿulamāʿ," and sometimes "jurists" interchangeably to refer to a specific group of people who are responsible for Shīʿī scholarly and research activities but have been and are in practice the leaders of the Shīʿī community. Theologians and narrators (muḥaddith) are other titles used to describe people in the same group of scholar-leaders of the Shīʿī community, but I use these titles only when I intend to emphasize their tendency to use reason and rational argument (in the case of theologians) or their insistence on relying on text (in the case of narrators).

[17] Hosseinian 2011, 43–194; Rostamian 2002, 231–328; Mohaddesi 1998; Torbatinejad 2016.

[18] I borrow this term from Sachedina (1981), which he uses to describe the branch of Shīʿī Islam that in the first centuries of Islam was known as the Imāmiyya and was later conceptualized as Twelver Shīʿism. The word "moderate" is a relatively good description of this branch because it always maintained distance from the ideas of the Ghālī Shīʿa, who were known to exaggerate religious tenets, especially in relation to the characteristics of the Imāms (although some Ghālī ideas entered Twelver Shīʿism later, when the latter's theological tenets were nearing completion). In addition, the description "moderate" can well explain the political position of this school, which after the events of Karbalāʾ in 61/680 never revolted against the ruling caliph. This moderate position was especially

the title of Twelver Shīʿism constantly repudiated the designation of messiahship to infallible Imāms. It was a recurring phenomenon that after the demise of an infallible Imām, some of his followers claimed that he was alive and would rise up again to form the promised just government. Sabaʾīyya,[19] Kaysāniyya,[20] Bāqiriyya,[21] Nāwūsiyya,[22] and Wāqifiyya[23] were among the important Shīʿī messianic sects. At the time, proto-Imāmī/Twelver Shīʿism repudiated all of these messianic conceptualizations of the Imāmate but later appropriated the notion of messianism, assigning it to its twelfth Imām, and reconstructed its theology based on this notion. During this process, previously dismissed messianic articulations significantly contributed to the evolution and consolidation of the peculiar messianism of Twelver Shīʿism. The question that arises in this regard

important in defining the political identity of this school and distinguishing it from other ʿAlīd Shīʿī sects that carried out multiple uprisings. Throughout this book, I will use this term as an alternative to Twelver Shīʿī, because the name "Twelver Imāmī" did not exist until the fourth/tenth century, and its use to describe this community during the Age of Presence is not very accurate.

[19] The idea of messianism in the Shīʿī tradition was first introduced by ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sabaʾ. He claimed that the first infallible Imām, ʿAlī, was not dead and would return to shower righteousness upon the earth (Hodgson 1976). His claim ushered in the formation of a short-lived sect, members of which became known as the Sabaʾīyya. Abd Allāh ibn Sabaʾ is one of the most controversial figures of early Islamic history, to the extent that many Sunnī accounts claim that he was a Jew and forged Shīʿism to obliterate Islam. Yet other narrations, both Shīʿī and Sunnī, raise doubts about whether he ever even existed. For further discussion, see Anthony 2012; Tucker 2008, 9–33; ʿAskari 2008; Anthony 2011; Halm and Mousavi-Khalkhali 2005, 39–48.

[20] The martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn in Karbalāʾ triggered a leadership crisis for the Imāmī Shīʿa, and at this time, divisions began to emerge in the Shīʿī community. Imām Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, the only male member of Imām Ḥusayn's family to survive the massacre at Karbalāʾ, stood adamantly by his decision to distance himself from not only the government but any form of political activity (Jafari 1979, 203–213). However, many Shīʿa thought that they should seek revenge, and they revolted against the caliph. Mukhtār's uprising, which was known as Kaysāniyya (less often known as the Mukhtāriyya), was a movement associated with Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, the stepbrother of the martyred Imām Ḥusayn. Thus, although Mukhtār was a founding politico-military leader of the Kaysāniyya, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya became the spiritual founding father of the movement. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya died in 700; however, numerous Kaysāniyya sect members disseminated the belief that he was still alive and would return as their victorious leader (Buhl 2007; Halm and Mousavi-Khalkhali 2005, 49–83; Al-Nawbakhtī and Kadhim 2007, 76–79).

[21] The title Bāqiriyya was given to those who denied the death of the fifth Imām, Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir, and claimed that he was the promised savior (Shahrastani, Kazi, and Flynn 1984, 142–143; Salimian 2008, 125–126).

[22] Nāwūsiyya refers to the sect of the Shīʿī community that repudiated the death of the sixth Imām and claimed him as the messiah. The Nāwūsiyya sect neither lasted very long nor left behind much of a legacy.

[23] The demise of the seventh Imām, Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim, gave birth to the Wāqifiyya (literally, "those who came to a standstill"), which lasted for one and a half centuries. Until the entrenchment of the messiahship of the twelfth Imām, the messiahship of the seventh Imām presented a formidable challenge for Twelver Shīʿism. Perhaps more important than its perseverance was the Wāqifiyya's conceptual contribution to the notion of occultation. The group's membership included not only people with considerable financial assets who played leadership roles in the community but also influential Shīʿī scholars as well. Hence, unlike other Shīʿī messianic sects, the Wāqifiyya produced voluminous and sophisticated literature in support of messianism in the Shīʿī tradition (Madelung 1986, 1236; Amir-Moezzi 1994, 101–103). Ironically, the Wāqifiyya made significant contributions to the conceptual consolidation of Twelver Shīʿism.

is how did it happen that the moderate Shīʿa, who had consistently over several generations opposed any messianic formulation of the concept of the Imāmate, not only accepted this formulation but made it the cornerstone of their identity? The answer to this question must be sought in the reality of the early centuries of Islamic history, when the Shīʿa's attempts to realize their politico-religious ideal, the formation of a theocratic government[24]—to use the vocabulary of modern political concepts—failed. As a result of these failures, the suffering wrought upon the Shīʿa leaders and community by the Sunnī rulers, and also because the position of the Shīʿa only weakened further as time passed, the Shīʿa came to the conclusion that there was no chance of realizing their politico-religious ideal. As a result, by attributing messianic characteristics to their twelfth Imām, the Shīʿa accepted that their ideal theocracy would be unattainable until some unknown future time.

An Unattainable Theocracy

In chapter 1, it will be illustrated that the legacies of the eleven Shīʿī infallible Imāms revealed a range of divergent political behaviors from which it would be almost impossible to discern a specific prescriptive political modus operandi. These behaviors included ruling as caliph (Imām ʿAlī), submitting to the authority of a caliph (Imām Ḥasan al-Mujtabā), and revolting against the sitting caliph (Imām Ḥusayn). The remaining infallible Imāms followed a pattern of maintaining a "principled distance," to use Bhargava's term,[25] from governing institutions with the exception of Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā, who accepted the position of crown prince, albeit on the condition that he would be excused from all governing responsibilities.[26]

In fact, after the tragedy of Karbalāʾ in 680/61, the moderate Shīʿī leadership circle in practice avoided any attempt to realize its politico-religious ideal. Even when the conditions seemed conducive, such as in the time of the sixth Imām,

[24] In describing their ideal form of government, Shīʿa generally refer to just and fair governance, an allusion to the promised government of the twelfth Imām. Although the word "theocracy" often carries negative connotations today, its use in this book is not to imply a necessarily negative response to the Shīʿa's ideal form of government. The word "theocracy" simply refers to the form and type of this government. By using the word "theocracy," I am saying that in accordance with the ideal government of the Shīʿa, the political leader is appointed by God and has the duty to implement religious laws, and the ultimate goal of the government is a religious one, meaning to lead people toward salvation.

[25] Bhargava 2013.

[26] Amir-Moezzi divides the political life of Shīʿī Imāms into four categories: (1) those who were directly and positively involved in politics, (2) those to whom no political activity has been attributed, (3) the particular case of the third Imām, Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, and (4) the particular case of the twelfth Imām, Imām al-Mahdī (Amir-Moezzi 1994, 62).

Imām Ṣādiq, Shīʿī leaders resisted the pleas of their followers and refrained from taking action. It can be said that theocratic secularism was formed not as an alternative to the Shīʿī politico-religious ideal but from the sect's politico-religious modus operandi in the post-Karbalāʾ era. But this pattern of behavior was fundamentally different from the Shīʿī framework that would develop in the fourth and fifth/tenth and eleventh centuries. In the age of the infallible Imāms' presence, hope and expectation that the ideal Shīʿī theocracy would be realized was a worldly and immediate concern. It was a worldly concern in the sense that it was seen as a phenomenon likely to come to pass through earthly mechanisms and in the form of political revolt. It was an immediate issue insofar as it did not refer to the unspecified future; rather, every generation expected the Imām of its age to rise up, overthrow the rule of the unwanted usurper, and install a just and fair government. During the Minor Occultation (260–329/874–941),[27] the expectation and hope for the realization of the Shīʿī politico-religious ideal continued unchanged. As will be discussed in chapter 2, the claim of the twelfth Imām's absence was not initially framed as a messianic assertion or an extraordinary phenomenon. Rather, at the outset, the absence of the twelfth Imām meant that he was hiding somewhere and would soon re-emerge, revolt against the illegitimate caliph, and form a just government. As the period of his absence extended beyond the natural course of a normal human life, a messianic conception of his character was formed, and the expectation and hope of overthrowing the unjust ruler and installing a just government in the here and now were consigned to an unknown future time. From this point, that is, from the early decades of the Major Occultation, the expectation of the formation of the ideal Shīʿī theocracy became an unworldly phenomenon whose implementation and timing depended on God's will. This messianic formulation levied no expectation upon believers and religious leaders to rebel against the ruling usurper and form an ideal Shīʿī government. As a result, the model of political behavior consistent with theocratic secularism transformed into an eternal pattern for the Shīʿa.

In sum, it will be argued that it was the persistently sorrowful experience endured by the infallible Imāms, which corresponded with the long formative period of Shīʿī identity, that resulted in the prevalence of a negative attitude toward governing institutions among Shīʿa and their association of governance and political power with evil, corruption, and oppression. This powerful

[27] The Age of Occultation is divided into the following two epochs: Minor (Ghaybat-i ṣughrā) and Major (Ghaybat-i kubrā). The Minor Occultation refers to a period of approximately seventy years when the twelfth Imām disappeared from the physical plane but remained in communication with his followers through four deputies. Upon the death of the fourth deputy in 941 CE, no successor was named. This omission marked the commencement of the Major Occultation, which continues to this day. The last deputy, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Samarī, presented a letter from the hidden Imām in which the Imām made clear that henceforth no one would be able to see him or be in touch with him (Aghajari 2002, 61). This will be discussed further in chapter 2.

negative sentiment placed the proto-Imāmī/Twelver Shīʿa in a self-contradictory situation due to the fact that their very identity clearly originated from a claim to rulership. While on the one hand, politics played a central role in the fundamental identity of the proto-Imāmī/Twelver Shīʿa, on the other, most of the infallible Imāms shunned practical politics and did not pursue the position of caliph.

Over the course of time, this paradox was resolved through the formation of a transcendental polity that not only rescued proto-Imāmī/Twelver Shīʿism from extinction but also increased its power and prestige. This transcendental polity evolved from the formulation of a theological dogma that attributed an eternal aspect to the last infallible Imām, fixing the number of infallible Imāms at twelve. At the same time, the vitality of the divine element in Shīʿī politics trapped proto-Imāmī/Twelver Shīʿism in an indefinite interregnum. This, in turn, manifested in a form of political dormancy, Shīʿa living in the hope that one day a savior endowed with transcendental power would fill the world with justice and equity. While many religious and/or ideological traditions share this messianic worldview, for the Shīʿa, it has become a living part of their politics, resulting in an ironic form of polity, which is conceptualized in this book as theocratic secularism.

In the period prior to the Major Occultation, the identity of the savior was unknown, and for this reason, a number of different individuals were considered to be the promised savior during the first few centuries of Islam. But the proto-Imāmī/Twelver Shīʿa agreed during the time of the Major Occultation that the twelfth Imām was the promised savior. He was the only person with the legitimate right to rule, and anyone purporting to lead a government was in fact the usurper of the right of the twelfth Imām. The illegitimacy of the rulers, or usurpers—if we are to adopt the terms used by the Shīʿa themselves—during the Major Occultation did stemmed not from the rulers' actions or religious orientation but from the simple fact that they had usurped the right of the Imām of the age. Shīʿī religious leaders were no exception to this rule, as they are neither obligated nor allowed by sharīʿa to be at the helm of government. In chapter 4, we will see that the issue of overthrowing the established government and forming a religiously legitimate and just administration had no place in the discussions of Shīʿī theologians and muḥaddīth during the development and consolidation of Shīʿī theology. Instead, such discussions were centered on how to attune Shīʿī relations with usurper rulers.

Another aspect of the articulation of politics during the Major Occultation was that the formation of an Islamic government was not considered possible until the re-emergence of the twelfth Imām and that such a government was outside the authority of the Shīʿī clerics. It was the logic and commitment of the religious leaders to theocratic secularism that, while they believed in theocracy (the formation of the ideal state under the leadership of the twelfth Imām), they

saw established governments as outside the realm of religion. This conceptualization was instituted by the founding scholars of Shīʿism in the fourth and fifth/tenth and eleventh centuries as the foundation of Shīʿī political theology and has determined the political behavior of Shīʿī leaders during the centuries since. In this book, I do not discuss the Ṣafawid period or the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, which make up two significant chapters of Shīʿism's political history, but I believe that the thought and behavior of Shīʿī religious leaders in these periods followed the model of theocratic secularism. Of course, it would require extensive research, which falls outside the scope of the current work, to prove this claim. Instead, in part II of the book, I consider contemporary history and argue that the formation of a political system based on the idea of wilāyat-i faqīh in Iran was not the product of a transformation in Shīʿī political theology, of which theocratic secularism was and remains the defining element. The 1979 Revolution and the formation of a faqīh-headed state were the fruits of the revolutionary conditions of the 1960s and '70s, combined with the balance of power relations in the political arena.

The Iranian Revolution and Ecclesial Transformation?

A glance at the developments of the last half century in Iran, the most significant Shīʿī base in the world,[28] offers a completely different picture from the theocratic secularism described above. It is not unreasonable to say that Iran's clerical Islamists[29] can be counted among the most successful Islamist movements in the Islamic world given their demonstrated capacity to overthrow the secular Pahlavi regime and establish a political structure headed by a jurist. Islamists in Iran were considerably different from Islamists in other Muslim countries.

[28] More than 90 percent of Iran's population is Shīʿa. Iraq and Bahrain have the largest numbers of Shīʿa after Iran, with Shīʿa accounting for an estimated 60 and 70 percent, respectively, of the two Arab nations' populations.

[29] I use the term "clerical Islamism" to describe the clerical and non-clerical figures revolving around the personality of Khomeini. These Islamists emphasize the dominance of the clergy in government positions, as well as the government's implementation of Islamic jurisprudential rules. After the adoption of the constitution in 1979, wilāyat-i faqīh became the central symbol of the discourse of clerical Islamism. The term "juridical Islam" has also been used to describe this type of Islamism (Hoseinizadeh 2010; Mirahmadi and Shiri 2009; Isaniya 2019; Lolaki 2020; Bazargan 1984, 127; Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2020, 202–207).

In addition to the clerical Islamists, there were and still are other groups that can be included under the general umbrella of Islamism. Due to their different tendencies, I use certain labels to demonstrate the differences between them. To describe groups and figures who emphasize democratic values—such as the Freedom Movement of Iran and the Movement of Militant Muslims—I use the term "liberal Islamists," and to describe groups and figures with leftist leanings—such as the Movement of God-Fearing Socialists and the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran—I use the term "leftist Islamists."

Prominent Islamist leaders such as Sayyid Qutb in Egypt and Sayyid Abul Aʿla Maududi in the Indian subcontinent were not trained jurists or theologians. For this reason, one may claim that their versions of Islamism lacked jurisprudential and theological richness. But Shīʿī Islamism in Iran was led by Khomeini, who had spent his entire life in the seminary and had reached the highest rank—marjaʿ-i taqlīd—of the semi-structured seminary system. In January–February 1970, Khomeini formulated his doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh. The doctrine was presented at the highest level of the seminary education system, that is, to students in the final stage of jurisprudential training called dars-i khārij, and its language, content, sources, and method give the impression that it has been formulated at the standard of a coherent theory of political theology. According to this doctrine, during the absence of the twelfth Imām, jurists inherit his religious and political authority and have both the religious right and duty to rebel against the usurper government and form a righteous government. Khomeini believed that all jurists should consider themselves obliged to form such a government, and in the case that one jurist succeeds in doing so, all believers—both other jurists and lay citizens—have a religious duty to follow that jurist in matters of governance. This doctrine not only outlined a plan for the establishment of a Shīʿī state during the twelfth Imām's absence, but it also set out the recommended methods of struggle and rebellion against the usurper—the Pahlavi government.

One might speculate at first glance that this doctrine, which both outlined the manner in which the established political system was to be overthrown and specified the key features of the system to be instigated in its place, was a blueprint for Shīʿī Islamists during the 1979 Revolution. The fact that a faqīh-headed state was formed after the victory of the Revolution in Iran may seem to further such conjecture. However, part II of this book seeks to dissect and interrogate this proposition. The central question guiding this part of the book is to what extent Khomeini's doctrine played a role in the victory of the 1979 Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, in which a jurist is the head of state.

The aforementioned speculation is framed on the basis of two different lines of argument and thus takes two forms. One line of argument holds that Khomeini's doctrine brought about a fundamental transformation of Shīʿī political theology and emerged as a new school of thought in the Shīʿī seminary. Khomeini convinced some clerics that the orthodox Shīʿī understanding of the relationship between religion and government was wrong and that the jurists had inherited the political authority of the twelfth Imām and the duty to form an Islamic government. Subsequently, according to this rationale, this intellectual transformation mobilized some of the clergy to teach the new reading of Shīʿī political theology to the masses and to make the faqīh-headed state a part of the believers' religious convictions. As a result, the religious masses, believing that the jurists were the representatives of the twelfth Imām, supported the Revolution and

the establishment of the Islamic Republic. In chapter 5, I challenge the above assumptions. It has been widely acknowledged that Khomeini's doctrine was far removed from the Shīʿī tradition, was in fact a novel theory proposed for the first time by Khomeini, and that wilāyat-i faqīh, in the sense of a jurist being the head of state, had never been spoken about in Shīʿī tradition before. While confirming these propositions, in chapter 5, I will evaluate the doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh from a new perspective. We will see that although this doctrine was introduced at the highest level of seminary education, it did not meet the academic standards of the seminary. Khomeini belonged to the Uṣūlī school, a school of thought in which the use of reason and rationality is permitted and in fact recommended to supplement the sacred texts. However, Khomeini's use of reason extended far beyond the accepted boundaries of the seminary's intellectual tradition. Because the existing Shīʿī literature as well as the centuries-old orthodox Shīʿī tradition did not provide Khomeini with sources to support his proposal, he avoided engaging with this literature or the prevailing Shīʿī tradition, instead making extensive use of argument alone. Albeit without naming names, his doctrine also attacked the attitudes and actions of the most significant and respected Shīʿī leaders of the past as well as Khomeini's own contemporaries, insultingly accusing them of having deviated from the fundamental principles of religion. To coin a phrase, I will explain that Khomeini was the illegitimate child of the Qum seminary and that his doctrine was a clumsy and ill-fitting patch in both the scholastic and social domains of Shīʿī seminary life. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that when Khomeini presented his doctrine, it did not find any acceptance in the seminary. None of Khomeini's marjaʿ-i taqlīd contemporaries reacted to his doctrine, much less positively—but not even negatively—and there is no indication that the doctrine was discussed or analyzed in the seminaries of Iran or Iraq at the time beyond in Khomeini's own classes. Therefore, it would be highly problematic to suggest that Khomeini's doctrine brought about a theoretical transformation in the seminary and that certain religious leaders, after accepting the doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh, mobilized religious people to support Khomeini's struggle to establish a faqīh-headed state.

Another basis for explaining the role of the doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh during the 1979 Revolution is that the doctrine was used as a blueprint by Islamists in the political arena, without any associated current in the Shīʿī seminary, in the name of a new school of thought. The vast majority of clerical Islamists were middle-ranking clerics, and high-ranking Shīʿī leaders, namely, the marjaʿ-i taqlīd, were not involved in the 1979 Revolution.[30] One might speculate that

[30] In this regard, Mohsen Kadivar has written very valuable works examining the thoughts and actions of many high-ranking religious leaders who opposed the 1979 Revolution and the involvement of the clergy in governance. See, for example, Kadivar 2015a; 2014d; 2020; 2018b; 2019; M. Kadivar 2017. See also S. H. Tabatabaei 2017; Mirzaei 2011; Hashemianfar 2011; Forati 2016.

the middle-ranked clerics, without the support of their high-ranking seminary leaders, transmitted the doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh directly to the religious masses and, through their political struggles, convinced them that a system based on wilāyat-i faqīh was a legitimate alternative to the Pahlavi monarchy. Given the mobilization of the masses in less than a decade and the formation of the government of the Islamic Republic headed by a jurist (Khomeini himself), one may infer that even if wilāyat-i faqīh was not a part of the religious convictions of the people, it was accepted by them as a political doctrine and mobilized them in support of the Revolution and the establishment of a faqīh-headed state.

Charles Kurzman argues that the involvement of more than 1 percent of a country's population in a revolution is a rare phenomenon and that part of the significance of the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917 was that more than 1 percent of each country's population participated in them. Kurzman believes that more than 10 percent of the Iranian population participated in the Iranian Revolution.[31] In fact, it was the clerics who, drawing on their extensive connections with the masses and access to an efficient religious network, were able to mobilize the religious masses against the Pahlavi government. However, the question that arises in relation to the aforementioned speculation is what was the place of the doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh in the messages and demands that the clerics conveyed to the people? The examination of various sources—including slogans used during the Revolution; the messages, statements, and speeches of Khomeini; and the memoirs of some key clerical Islamist leaders—reveals that the doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh was the great absentee from all of the Revolution's developments. Between Khomeini's introduction of wilāyat-i faqīh in Najaf in 1970 and seven months after the victory of the 1979 Revolution—that is, September 1979—he spoke not once of this doctrine. Further, as I will discuss extensively, Khomeini repeatedly emphasized that neither he in particular nor the clerics as a class would occupy any position in the government of the post-Pahlavi state. Rather, he said that he would play a supervisory and guiding role outside the government structure. Much evidence will be presented in the last two chapters of this book to show that even after the victory of the Revolution, Khomeini did not intend to occupy an official government post. He and the other clerical Islamists endorsed the original draft constitution, which made no reference to the doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh. Likewise, the title "Islamic Republic" approved in the referendum determining the name of the new political system did not convey the meaning a faqīh-headed state, neither to the voters nor to the political groups who voted for it. In chapter 8, I will show that the astonishing victory of the Islamists in the election of the Assembly of Experts for the Constitution changed the course of events and that it was during

[31] Kurzman 2004, 121.

the debates of this assembly that the constitution was drafted with a focus on the idea of wilāyat-i faqīh. But it is interesting that even during the drafting of the constitution based on wilāyat-i faqīh by the Assembly of Experts, Khomeini's doctrine did not play any role. Relying on the balance of power, as well as using broad and vague religious concepts and beliefs such as the claim that "there is a concept of an Islamic government," the Islamists were able to configure the new political system around the concept of wilāyat-i faqīh. Overall, in part II of the book, my aim is to show that the formation of the political system centered on wilāyat-i faqīh was not the product of any change in the religious beliefs of religious scholars or the masses. Rather, political developments and changes in the balance of power, especially the masses' entrance into the competitive political arena in favor of the clerical Islamists, provided an opportunity for them to present the scheme of wilāyat-i faqīh to the Assembly of Experts and draft a constitution that guaranteed clerics' dominance over the country's future political structure.

There is a further analysis of the events after the 1979 Revolution, which claims that Khomeini and his entourages had intended to establish a faqīh-headed state from the start but deceptively concealed their true desires until favorable conditions arose. There is much evidence to refute this analysis and show that Khomeini was genuine in his initial claim that he was not seeking to seize power. This claim may seem to contradict the fact that Khomeini proposed the doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh around ten years before the Revolution. But an examination of the doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh, as well as the statements of Khomeini and other Islamists, shows that they viewed this doctrine as an ideal for the distant future and that they neither contemplated nor intended implementing it themselves. Contrary to the interpretation that Khomeini deliberately engaged in deception, this understanding of the behavior of Khomeini and the clerical Islamists confirms the key argument of this book. The dominance of theocratic secularism over the Shīʿī intellectual atmosphere at that time meant that the doctrine of wilāyat-i faqīh was not taken seriously by the clerical Islamists themselves. There is ample evidence that the Islamists did not see the proposal as feasible, and Khomeini himself said at the time that "no sane person expects our propaganda and teachings to lead to the formation of an Islamic government any time soon."[32] Foucault's report on the Iranian Revolution alludes to a similar point, stating that no one in Iran used the term "Islamic government" to refer to a clerical government but that the ideal they had in mind was both very old and at the same time a reference to the distant future.[33] Thus, it was not the masses' belief in the ideal of the faqīh-headed state that mobilized them to support the clerical

[32] Khomeini 1981, 132.
[33] Foucault quoted in Afary, Anderson, and Foucault 2005, 206.

Islamists. Drawing on Charles Taylor's notion of "social imaginary,"[34] the ways in which the ordinary people imagined their sociopolitical surroundings will be explored, and it will be suggested that the continued role of extant religious motifs and symbols in people's social imaginaries provoked them to support the clerical Islamists, not any doctrinal shift.

The support of the masses and their absolute numerical superiority at the ballot box put the clerical Islamists in a much more privileged position than any other group, and they took advantage of this opportunity and wrote the constitution of the new system in such a way as to guarantee their continued domination of Iranian politics. The story of wilāyat-i faqīh after the adoption of the constitution and its institutionalization in the new political system is an important issue that must be addressed separately. Rather, in the concluding chapter of this book, I briefly discuss the efforts of the clerical Islamists, after seizing the government apparatus, to launch a large-scale mobilization in both the seminary and the public arena to make belief in wilāyat-i faqīh part of the people's religious convictions. But there is ample evidence to question their claim to success in this endeavor. A change in religious belief tends to be a time-consuming process, and one might argue that the Islamic Republic is educating a generation of believers for whom faith in wilāyat-i faqīh is part of their belief system. Future events will reveal the accuracy or otherwise of such speculation, but the possibility should not be ruled out, because orthodox Shīʿī theology also evolved and consolidated in response to political developments at a particular point in time. Perhaps the idea of wilāyat-i faqīh will, after a long period of time, mature and become established at the core of a religious sect emerging from Twelver Shīʿism. But in today's context, it is safe to say that this has not yet happened and that orthodox Shīʿī political theology remains the mainstay of Shīʿī religious belief. For this reason, it is important and necessary that it be packaged as a conceptual framework and promoted as a cohesive politico-religious discourse both within the seminary and in the political sphere. This conceptualization can help mobilize the religious masses and orthodox Shīʿī clerics to fight against the authoritarian system of the Islamic Republic.

The Necessity and Importance of Theocratic Secularism

Following the 1979 Revolution, a new form of Shīʿism emerged, which in this book is referred to as governmental Shīʿism. This form of Shīʿism, by dominating the state apparatus and gaining access to its resources, soon became the most powerful Shīʿī discourse in the politico-religious space of Iran. The rise of

[34] Taylor 2004.

Shīʿī clerics in Iran has also led to widespread interest in the Shīʿī sect. Andrew Newman rightly characterizes the years after the 1979 Revolution as the years of the expansion of Shīʿī studies.[35] Perhaps a more accurate description would be achieved if we said that there has been an explosion of studies about governmental Shīʿism, not all Shīʿī schools of thought. The boisterous and controversial emergence of governmental Shīʿism has caused it to attract the exclusive attention of both the media and academic scholars. At the same time, the disproportionate attention paid to governmental Shīʿism has been accompanied by indifference to Shīʿī orthodoxy. For this reason, despite the expansion of Shīʿī studies, the relevant literature does not provide an accurate and comprehensive picture of the different Shīʿī discourses. Of course, neither does this book claim to provide a comprehensive picture of all the numerous schools of thought and practice in the Shīʿī world. Three major discourses can be identified in the Shīʿī/Iranian world: Shīʿī orthodoxy, governmental Shīʿism, and reformist Shīʿism.[36]

My main focus in this book is on conceptualizing the relationship between religion and government in Shīʿī orthodoxy, as well as the relationship between Shīʿī orthodoxy and governmental Shīʿism. My previous book, *Religious Secularity*, was about Shīʿī reformism, and I will not focus on this discourse in the present work. However, it may not be misplaced to explain briefly that reformist Shīʿism took shape in the mid-1980s following the disappointment of some religious intellectuals with governmental Shīʿism. In fact, reformist Shīʿism was a backlash against the authoritarian process of governmental Shīʿism. A group of religious scholars and political activists who were in the clerical Islamist camp during the Revolution and helped institutionalize the faqīh-headed state in the first decade after its establishment reconsidered their views, especially on the relationship between religion and government. In fact, the lessons they learned from the experience of the convergence of religion and government in the first decade of the Islamic Republic proved to them that such a fusion is to the detriment of both the state and religion. For this reason, they seek to re-evaluate the foundations of the Islamic state's political legitimacy and religious authority.[37] Occupied by the desire to rescue religion from the ills of the state, religious reformers promote the separation of religion and government.

These religious reformers use sources such as the Qurʾān, ḥadīths, and history of Islam in their efforts, but their intellectual origins can be traced to modern political thought. Their proposals and ideals are epistemologically rooted in the modern and Western traditions, and in fact, they deploy, adapt, and recast "the

[35] Newman 2013.

[36] In addition, further intellectual trends and political groupings within the Shīʿī world may also be identified. See, for example, Tabatabaeifar 2015.

[37] Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2020.

theories and critical methods of various Euro-American philosophies in their efforts to debunk and challenge clerical political supremacy during the second and third decades of the Islamic Republic's existence."[38] As Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi demonstrates in detail in his groundbreaking book, a close relationship between religious reformers and political reformers was created in the decades of the 1990s and 2000s, and this discourse was able to gain political power in Iran. But the movement failed in its attempt to bring about structural reform to and the democratization of the political system of the Islamic Republic. Today this movement has lost much of its influence in the Iranian political space, and there is no prospect of it challenging governmental Shīʿism. Nonetheless, reformist Shīʿism has attracted much attention in the academic and media spheres in recent decades.[39]

It is the other two Shīʿī discourses, Shīʿī orthodoxy and governmental Shīʿism, and the relationship between them that are the focus of this book. As mentioned earlier, governmental Shīʿism has been researched extensively over the last four decades. For this reason, the focus of this book is on Shīʿī orthodoxy, and I will examine governmental Shīʿism in relation to its distance and divergence from Shīʿī orthodoxy. Among the three Shīʿī discourses, Shīʿī orthodoxy is the least studied, and when referred to in the relevant literature, its approach to politics is characterized using terms such as "apolitical" and "quietist." This conceptualization is influenced to some extent by the inaccurate conceptualization of Khomeini's discourse, portraying him as the person who politicized the Shīʿa. In this book, using the phrase "governmental Shīʿism," I argue that Khomeini did not politicize the Shīʿa but governmentalized Shīʿī Islam. The Shīʿa were political from the beginning, and this is evident not only throughout history and in the actions of Shīʿī leaders but also in the Shīʿī theological framework, which clearly shows that politics is a significant element of Shīʿī theology. Shīʿī leaders were never apolitical or quietist, but rather, maintaining distance from the state apparatus has been the Shīʿī authorities' guiding principle in their political engagement throughout history.

Another important point about the conceptualization of orthodox Shīʿī political behavior is that this conceptualization has not yet been outlined in the academic literature related to the study of Shīʿism, political Islam, or Iran. Even more

[38] Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2020, 11.

[39] Countless books and articles have been written on the various dimensions of the religious reform movement in Iran, and it is not possible to list them all here. To give only a few examples, see Mohammadi 2018; Tazmini 2009; Ansari 2006; Parsa 2016; Brumberg 2001; Mirsepassi 2010; Rivetti 2019; Schwerin 2015; Shakibi 2010; Tezcür 2010; Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2016; Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2020; Ghamari-Tabrizi 2008; Boroujerdi 1996; Soroush, Sadri, and Sadri 2000; Jahanbakhsh 2001; Eshkevari, Mir-Hosseini, and Tapper 2006; Vahdat 2002; Nabavi 2012; Siavoshi 2017; Ghobadzadeh 2015; Kamrava 2008; Shahibzadeh 2016; Bayat 2007.

significantly, this conceptualization has not been articulated within the seminary by Shīʿī religious authorities. Shīʿī religious authorities have never sought to theorize their political thought and action. As will be discussed in chapter 5, prior to the present period, the issue of government was briefly discussed under the category of "social interactions" (muāmilāt) in jurisprudential books. There are two exceptions to this pattern in Shīʿī history. One is the book *The Awakening of the Community and Refinement of Nation*, which was written during the Iranian constitutional period in defense of constitutionalism by Mirza Mohammad Hossein Naeini (1860–1936), a constitutionalist scholar,[40] and the other is Khomeini's wilāyat-i faqīh. But after seizing power in Iran, the clerical Islamists have made extensive use of their resources to generate literature in support of their particular reading of Shīʿī politics. For this reason, countless works have been produced in the last decades in support of governmental Shīʿism. Orthodox Shīʿa, meanwhile, remain loyal to their established traditions and refrain from writing and conceptualizing their political behavior and thought. A clear example in this regard is Ayatollah Sistani, the trustee of the Najaf seminary, who has played a determining role in Iraqi politics, especially over the past two decades, and has entered the political scene directly several times. However, Sistani has never held an official government position and has insisted on retaining his distance from the Iraqi government. Given the decisive role of Sistani in Iraqi politics, it would be very problematic to claim that he is apolitical. However, Sistani has not written any book or treatise in which he has formulated the basis of his political thought. It is this task that the present work addresses to elucidate the framework of political thought and action of orthodox Shīʿī leaders such as Sistani through an examination of Shīʿism's theological foundations. In addition to being an analytical-descriptive concept, theocratic secularism is normative-prescriptive as well. As a normative-prescriptive claim, theocratic secularism develops an attenuated notion of political secularism arguing for the de-governmentalization of religion in Iran, albeit not its privatization. Theocratic secularism advocates a political role for religion within the context of civil society rather than in the state apparatus or on political platforms.

[40] This work is considered the most important conceptual legacy of the pro-constitutionalist ʿulamāʿ. It is also widely known as the most important Shīʿī treaty in the contemporary age promoting democratic polity. Naeini supported the parliamentary system not because he viewed it as the ideal system for the Shīʿa but because it was a feasible option deemed superior to an absolute monarchy. For a detailed explanation of Naeini's political thought and his contribution to the Constitutional Revolution, see Nouraie 1975; Hairi 1977, 109–234; Naeini 2003; Najafi 1994; Boozari 2011, 99–152; Feirahi 2016; Derakhsheh 2001: 199).

An Attenuated Notion of Political Secularism

The conceptual framework for this book has its nascency in the literature addressing the topics of secularism and religion–state relations. However, rather than testing any specific theory in the Iranian/Shīʿī context, a range of ideas and notions are modified and reformulated in a bid to develop a precise notion of political secularism. In addition, my utilization of this conception of secularism, which is both descriptive and normative, does not suggest that I aim to offer a comprehensive solution to all the questions surrounding state–religion relations in Iran. The recurring question of where to draw a line between religion and politics is both complex and multifaceted; it invites neither a definitive nor a consensual answer. The problem of where to draw this line continues to be widely debated in mature, secular democracies. Thus, it could appear immature to either expect or claim that a single theory or framework could be developed that would solve the problem permanently. As Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im maintains, all societies are constantly "negotiating the relationship between religion and the state over many issues at different times."[41] Implicit in the notion of negotiation is the suggestion that one should adopt a step-by-step strategy. A pressing and immediate concern in Iranian/Shīʿī state–religion relations is the clerical Islamists' claim that they have the religious responsibility and right to be in charge of the state's institutions. In response, this book articulates a religious rationale for political secularism, arguing that the political theology of Twelver Shīʿism is based on belief in an unattainable theocracy and leaves Shīʿī authorities with the religious responsibility to maintain distance from the state apparatus.

There is a widespread understanding of the notion of secularism according to which it not only is a phenomenon external to religion but has an antithetical relationship with religion. William Connolly finds the source of this understanding of secularism in the work of Immanuel Kant, whose "objective [was] to curtail the authority of the faculty of ecclesiastical theology." To this end, he elevated a "universal philosophy, also known as 'rational religion,' to the authoritative position previously reserved for Christian theology."[42] Connolly suggests that the Kantian approach, while attributing the simplicity and singularity to public life, fails to identify the complex and multifaceted character of the extant issues. Matthew Scherer reframes this articulation of secularism as "Kantian secularism," which he claims stands in contrast to "Hegelian secularism." Hegelian secularism opens up a space in which to negotiate religious traditions: "Where Kantian secularists emphasize the detachment of secular reason from religious tradition, Hegelian secularists emphasize the work done by a specifically

[41] An-Na'im 2008, 30.
[42] Connolly 2007, 30.

Christian religious tradition in preparing secular reason, and thus the continuity between this tradition and modern secularism."[43] The Hegelian approach to secularism marks the point of departure for this book, in which I argue that rather than confronting political secularism, Shīʿī tradition advocates a form of political secularism. To this end, a religious rationale can be constructed with the dual purpose of promoting political secularism and making a case against the clerical Islamists' construction of a faqīh-headed state. Discussions about Kantian and Hegelian conceptions of secularism are to some degree retrospective in the sense that they reread the evolutionary process of the notion of secularism from a Western Christian perspective. In this book, I stress the lack of secularism in the contemporary Iranian context, so there is no retrospective scrutiny of the roots of any practiced form of secularism. Rather, the book highlights the relationship between a foundational theological component of the Shīʿī orthodoxy and a centuries-old mode of living, that is, an ingrained and prescriptive guide to political secularism. This book is both descriptive and prescriptive; it identifies and describes a secular quality in Shīʿī orthodoxy and prescribes it as a normative framework for religion–state relations.

Providing a religious rationale for political secularism could also prove advantageous inasmuch as it may dilute the negative connotations associated with the notion of secularism. Throughout the Muslim world, the ideal of secularism is perceived as a Western colonial ideology aimed at abolishing religion and weakening local cultures. As in other parts of the Muslim world,[44] from the early 1930s until the end of the 1970s, an authoritarian and top-down secularization policy was implemented in Iran. Rightly or wrongly, the secular-oriented Pahlavi administration was considered representative of a vision prescribed by colonial powers that were considered hostile to the Iranian/Shīʿī worldview and way of life. As Nikki Keddie writes, religious revivalism was a backlash to alien and state-imposed secularism.[45] Thus, articulating a conception of secularism that is rooted in the Shīʿī theology will help to overcome the negative connotations surrounding secularism.

This book also draws from a specific line of scholarship that acknowledges the existence of multiple forms and experiences of secularism. At the philosophical and macro-historical levels, Taylor's book *A Secular Age* is the most telling case. Taylor's allusion to "one age" implies that other ages and traditions have fostered other forms of secularity. Many other works have elaborated on the various forms of secularism both normatively and descriptively.[46] What I refer to in this

[43] Scherer 2011, 624.
[44] Esposito 2000.
[45] Keddie 2003.
[46] See, for example, Beaufort 2008; Davie 2000, 15; Brown and Snape 2010; An-Na'im 2008; Modood 2010; Kuru 2009; Taylor 2007; Maclure and Taylor 2011; Esposito 2010; Burchardt and Wohlrab-Sahr 2013; Hashemi 2010; Stepan 2011.

book is another "secular age" (using Taylor's terminology freely). As will become evident, the notion of secularism in this book is far narrower than that which Taylor traces and attributes to the lived experience of the Anglo-Saxon world.

Before detailing this attenuated conception of political secularism, I feel obliged to mention that John Rawls's notion of "overlapping consensus" also inspired the conceptual foundation of this study. According to overlapping consensus, varying comprehensive normative doctrines may endorse similar sets of principles for reasons internal to their own doctrines and perspectives. While for Rawls the notion of justice in the liberal tradition is central,[47] in this book the necessity to divorce the religious authorities from the institution of the state is a major concern. In Iran, the convergence of state and religion has proven detrimental for both religion and politics. The end goal of separating the state from religion is similar to that of the well-known secularization thesis, the genesis of which is found in the Western Christian world. However, different reasoning and logic are needed to promote a vision of political secularism in the Iranian/Shīʿī context. The leading discussions centering on secularism in the Western context were initiated by political philosophers, political scientists, and sociologists for whom the primary concern was the emancipation of politics from religion. However, my focus here is the emancipation of religion from the state, a proposal supported by reasoning internal to the Shīʿī theology. The separation of state from religion will be articulated as a part of the religious conviction of the Shīʿī believers and on the basis of a rationale that is purely religious.

It is also timely to reflect briefly here on the secularization thesis. As Bhargava and José Casanova suggest, despite all the critiques of the secularization thesis, its core—the notion of institutional differentiation—remains a tenable and desirable ideal.[48] The secularization thesis enjoyed paradigmatic status within the modern social sciences for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In its simple format, the thesis assumed a causal relationship between modernization and secularization: the more modern a society becomes, the more secular it will become. During this period, the term "secular" and its derivatives were understood in sharp contrast to religion. Due to its hegemonic dominance, it was not considered necessary to test this thesis, nor was it ever "rigorously examined or even formulated explicitly and systematically."[49] Without any supporting data or solid evidence, the thesis incorporated and propounded profound claims, including the decline of religious beliefs, privatization of religion, and decline in religion's social and political importance, as well as institutional differentiation

[47] Rawls 1993, 133–172.
[48] Bhargava 2011; Casanova 1994.
[49] Casanova 1994, 17.

including separation of the state from the church. Jeffrey Hadden terms it "a hodgepodge of loosely employed ideas rather than a systematic theory."[50]

From the 1960s onward, questions were raised regarding the secularization thesis and its fundamental claims. An influx of data and evidence proved a formidable challenge to the thesis, with some scholars demanding erasure of the term "secularization" from the sociological lexicon.[51] However, as one might expect, their demands did not signal the demise of the secularization thesis. Rather, their questioning of the thesis provoked widespread scrutiny of the various claims and assumptions embedded within it. Some of its claims were adamantly refuted, including its proposals that religion would decline and eventually disappear and that religion's influence in public life would diminish. Conversely, however, notions of institutional differentiation, in particular separation of the state from religion, have largely survived. Although the question of how well the ideal of separation can be implemented is considered relatively in the context of different countries, from a normative viewpoint the ideal is not often refuted. Having said that, it is widely agreed that in the real world, there is no such a thing as "perfect separation," an outcome once envisioned by James Madison, one of the founding fathers of American secularism.[52] Nonetheless, it is still a consensually agreed ideal that separation of state institutions from the religious establishment will signal a favorable outcome for both religion and politics.

Separation of Religious and Political Authority

In opposition to the overall trend, some scholars do scrutinize the core ideal of separation in the secularization thesis, prising it open for questioning. Bhargava's work, which is particularly important in this regard, distinguishes various forms of separation, including strict neutrality, one-sided exclusion (typified by the French and Turkish models), and two-sided exclusion (the American notion of the "wall of separation"). Bhargava, voicing his objections to these models of separation, emphasizes the problems they encounter in terms of managing religion's role in the public sphere. Offering an alternative, he articulates a model of separation now celebrated as the "Indian model of secularism." Bhargava maintains that the following three levels of connection/disconnection between religion and state can be investigated: (1) the level of ends, (2) the level of institutions/personnel, and (3) the level of law and public policy. In effect, he states that disconnection at the first two levels demarcates the boundaries between secular and

[50] Hadden 1987, 598.
[51] Shiner 1967; Stark and Iannaccone 1994; Martin 1969, 22; Stark 1999, 270.
[52] Madison 2006, 307.

nonsecular states. Apropos of the third level, public policy and law, Bhargava offers a more complicated and nuanced prescription. He utilizes the term "principled distance," according to which a flexible approach should be adopted when considering the issues of inclusion/exclusion of religion in/from public policy and the engagement/disengagement of the state in/from religious matters. Decisions pertinent to the inclusion/exclusion of religion and engagement/disengagement of the state will "depend on the context, nature or current state of relevant religions."[53] With reference to fundamental values, in particular peace, freedom, and equality, Bhargava argues that inclusion and engagement ought to be governed by specific values:

> [R]eligion may intervene in the affairs of the state if such intervention promotes freedom, equality, or any other value integral to secularism. For example, citizens may support a coercive law of the state grounded purely in a religious rationale if this law is compatible with freedom or equality. The state may engage with religion or disengage from it, may engage positively or negatively, but which it does will depend on whether these values are promoted or undermined.[54]

Bhargava's work on political secularism is guided by concern regarding the management of difficulties attributable to religious differences and diversity. While this concern persists in Iran today, it is not the fundamental dilemma impacting the country's religious and state relations. As suggested earlier, the major problem in Iran's current polity is the clergy's claim to rulership. A modified version of Bhargava's conceptualization of the three levels of connection/disconnection and his notion of "principled distance" prove helpful to this study. Bhargava maintains that disconnection at the two first levels, that is, ends and personnel, is a precondition for a state to be considered secular. The religious rationale articulated here also envisages disconnection at these levels. It is suggested that according to Shīʿī orthodoxy, not only the claims of Shīʿī authorities to rulership but all existing states during the Age of Occultation are religiously illegitimate. Hence, no religious mission is attributable to the state. This does not imply that within this framework there is no expectation that the state should comply with religious teachings. Throughout history, Shīʿī authorities have employed different methods to persuade and compel the state to observe religious teachings. On more than one occasion, they have succeeded. However, given that the Shīʿī authorities have never considered the state to be their property or affiliate, their expectations of the state have been generally limited and occasional.

[53] Bhargava 2006, 649.
[54] Bhargava 2006, 649.

Their somewhat ironic relationship with the state provided the Shīʿī authorities with an opportunity to justify their inaction upon realizing that their power failed to match the power of the state. The conviction that all states—with the exception of the state ruled by the hidden Imām—are religiously illegitimate makes it possible to strike a compromise. In other words, due to its religious illegitimacy, the state is not expected to fulfill the end goals of religion.

Bhargava's notion of "principled distance" also will be subject to some modification. He grants the state the authority to make decisions regarding when and how to engage with and include religion. In the Shīʿī context, the religious authorities[55] are designated the agents of principled distance. Instead of being guided by the values of peace, freedom, and equality, religious authorities are guided by Shīʿī teaching that dictates whether they should engage with—or disengage from—political issues. I am not suggesting that as a normative framework the notion of principled distance is capable of establishing a solid and well-defined role for the Shīʿī authorities in sociopolitical matters. The religious authorities' engagement in political issues has always been a source of controversy and tension; for this reason, it will be an ongoing process of negotiation. Further to their potential to set state and religious authorities on a collision course, issues relating to the scope and scale of clerical involvement in politics have always been and will continue to be a source of polemic debate within the religious spectrum and among different religious authorities. The usefulness of the notion of principled distance lies in its proclivity to demonstrate two corresponding claims: (1) from a religious standpoint, Shīʿī authorities should engage in politics, and (2) at the same time, they are religiously obligated to maintain distance from governing positions. As such, their engagement should be occasional and context-based. Religious establishments are not political entities; they should neither act as political parties nor aspire to governing positions. In order to further clarify the distinction between the engagement of religious authorities

[55] In the Shīʿī context, the term "religious authorities" does not encompass any person independent of religious scholars and jurists. From the outset, the term "Shīʿa" alluded to a community within a community. In their attempts to avoid confrontation with the larger community, in particular with the political authorities, leaders sought to establish self-governing mechanisms suited to the management of their community affairs. In the early centuries of Shīʿism, due to the significance of the transmission of the ḥadīths and jurisprudential rulings, disciples of the infallible Imāms commenced acting as their representatives within the community. The roles of the disciples evolved over time: Liyakat Takim describes eight major roles that disciples (or *rijal*, later jurists) played. As well as acting as spiritual/religious leaders, scholars, and judges, jurists acted as community leaders addressing a wide range of socioeconomic issues. Although the Shīʿa have not always been a minority group, the idea of preserving religious and communal independence from the political structure has remained a defining feature of Shīʿism. This is why, throughout Shīʿī history, religious scholars have continued to act as community authorities as well as jurists and religious/spiritual authorities. For further discussion of the issue of authority in Shīʿim, see Takim 2006; Newman 2014; Sachedina 1998; Mavani 2013.

in political matters and the function of a political party, exploration of another conceptual framework is in order.

Casanova's notions of "public religion" and "deprivatization" of religion offer useful frameworks for the systematic articulation of a prospective role for Shīʿī Islam within the realm of Iranian civil society. Casanova explores religion by problematizing a key component of the conventional secularization paradigm, namely, that religion ought to be relegated to the private sphere. Demonstrating that the prophecy of the privatization of religion has proven false, Casanova argues convincingly that such privatization is neither viable nor desirable. Thus, Casanova's articulation of the deprivatization of religion, as both a descriptive and a prescriptive notion, challenges the militant secularization paradigm. Casanova compares varying religious traditions, some of which are compelled by their "tradition, principle, and historical circumstances to remain basically private religions of individual salvation." He maintains that due to "certain cultural traditions, religious doctrinal principles, and historical circumstances," some religions have acquired public and communal identities that have enabled them not only to assume public roles but to resist all pressure to privatize.[56] Urging his readers to acknowledge the public presence of many religions, Casanova adopts a normative position, suggesting that religion can play a positive and constructive role in the public sphere.

Casanova endeavors to identify a distinctive space for religion in the public sphere, in the process challenging the liberal and civic republic models of distinction between the private and public spheres. As an alternative, he advocates tripartite division of the modern democratic polity into state, political society, and civil society and develops a new typology of public religions. He discusses the different forms and platforms utilized for the engagement of religion in political issues and argues cogently that civil society is the only platform via which religions can play positive and constructive sociopolitical roles.

With some modifications, Casanova's notions of deprivatization and public religion will prove useful analytical tools for contemplating a constructive role for Shīʿī religion in Iran's political milieu. Casanova's notion of deprivatization has inspired me to contemplate the de-governmentalization of religion in the Iranian/Shīʿī context, which could facilitate the emancipation of religion from the detrimental influence of the state. One may suggest that Casanova's notion of deprivatization is a response to the zealous craving of the secularization paradigm to jettison religion from the public sphere. Here I use the notion of de-governmentalization as a normative response to the ruling clergy's fervent campaign to take control of all of the country's religious institutions, rituals, and dictums. When in power, clerical Islamists launched a systematic and politically

[56] Casanova 1994, 224.

calculated campaign to bring all aspects of religion under their control. While on the one hand, governmentalized Shīʿism has had a detrimental impact on the country's political sphere, on the other, the clerical Islamists' abuse of religion for political purposes has severely damaged the reputation of religion itself. Therefore, the emancipation of the religion from the Iranian state is necessary. But also important is the contemplation of a sociopolitical role of religion in a prospective post–Islamic Republic context. Contemporary discussion of religion–state relations in the country is understandably centered on the urgency of the former issue. However, this has resulted in the negligence of an important question: when religion is separated from the state apparatus, how and in which sphere should it play its sociopolitical role?

Addressing this question will have a twofold benefit: such exploration may (1) generate a constructive vision of state–religion–society relations and also (2) comfort religious people in a country in which a bitter history of anti-religious secularization remains a constant source of anxiety. Casanova's notion of public religion could be employed to retrospectively suggest that Shīʿī orthodoxy has played a public role for centuries in the realm of civil society. While its usage may sound anachronistic, as Tanvir Anjum and Hasan Hanafi suggest, the concept of civil society can apply to the Muslim world.[57] Throughout history, there have been occasions during which Shīʿī authorities have engaged with the political sphere in the form of a political movement. The Tobacco Protest (1891) and the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911) are outstanding examples of times during which the religious authorities played a leading role in the political sphere. Somewhat interestingly, on both occasions, religion played a constructive role: (a) in support of the local merchants during the first incident and (b) in support of the introduction of parliamentarianism during the second. That said, it may be unwise to advocate the incorporation of religion into the political sphere based on two positive historical experiences. There have been other occasions, such as the Land Reform program and abolishing feudalism (1962–1971) and the extension of the right to vote to women (1962), during which the entrance of religion into the political sphere proved destructive. As is frequently observed, the occasional engagement of religious authorities with the political sphere became an ongoing pattern, eventually consolidating in the clerical Islamists' occupation of the state apparatus. Thus, consonant with Casanova's proposal, its positioning within civil society may prove the most desirable space for the public role of religion in a prospective post–Islamic Republic Iran. However, one must concede that there is no clear-cut border between civil society and the political sphere. Religion's engagement might take the form of a pattern of moving between two spaces: civil society and the political sphere. One anticipates that this

[57] Anjum 2012; Hanafi 2002.

will become part of ongoing negotiations vis-à-vis the matter of religion–politics relations.

Some Caveats

I need to clarify a few points here before commencing the main discussion of this book. First, the study of the political theology of Shīʿī orthodoxy and governmental Shīʿism can be centered on numerous different subjects. Matters including, but not limited to, democracy, human rights, women's rights, and pluralism can all be interesting topics for comparative studies of the thought and action of Shīʿī orthodoxy and governmental Shīʿism. The Shīʿī government's record on the aforementioned issues is clear enough and clearly negative. However, it would not be unreasonable to argue that as a result of its interaction with governance matters, Shīʿī jurisprudence has demonstrated some capacity for reform and flexibility, which has enabled it to survive in and adapt to the needs of the modern world. The developments of "dynamic ijtihād" and "expediency jurisprudence," which will be discussed in chapter 5, are demonstrative in this regard. We can also point to the taking shape of progressive ideas in religious reformism as one of the indirect and unintended achievements of the experience of governmental Shīʿism. Not only have widespread debates about democracy, pluralism, tolerance, and other modern concepts entered the discourse of religious reformists in response to governmental Shīʿism, but these issues have also penetrated Shīʿī jurisprudence. An illustrative example in this regard is the discourse of human rights, which has found an important place in religious reformism, particularly in the work of people such as Ayatollah Montazeri and Mohsen Kadivar.

But an important consideration here in terms of issues such as human rights is that the practical and intellectual frameworks of orthodox Shīʿism have remained largely intact over the centuries and conflict significantly with the accepted standards of today. For example, the concept of human equality has no place in the orthodox Shīʿī framework. In orthodox Shīʿī jurisprudence, there are strong and intact bases for discrimination between men and women and between Muslims and non-Muslims. The proposal to de-governmentalize religion will not automatically solve these issues. Therefore, we can also talk about the need for reform within orthodox Shīʿism. In addition, there is also scope to discuss the responsibility of the government to protect the basic rights of citizens. The de-governmentalization of religion would mean that the state would no longer be in charge of religious affairs, but this should not allow the state to eschew responsibility for discrimination that may occur on religious grounds. The extent to and mechanisms through which the government could play a role in this regard are

an important issue. Perhaps Bhargava's concept of principled distance, discussed above, could be useful in this regard. In accordance with this concept, the government could support the positive aspects of religious traditions and take a stand against the negative ones in a way that "attends simultaneously to issues of intra-religious oppression and inter-religious domination."[58] This issue naturally involves multiple dimensions and requires the development of a comprehensive strategy that is beyond the scope of this book. The reason I am clarifying the need to address issues such as human rights in orthodox Shīʿism here is that while the concept of theocratic secularism has a positive connotation, this should not be taken to imply that orthodox Shīʿism is necessarily positioned in favor of democracy or human rights, nor am I endorsing it as an all-encompassing solution for the political landscape of Iran. The experience of governmental Shīʿism has demonstrated that religious leaders holding the coercive power of the state can lead to widespread human rights abuses as well as the formation of an authoritarian government. For this reason, the proposal of theocratic secularism to preclude religious leaders from seizing power could limit the power of the religious establishment and the extent of the damage they inflict in areas such as human rights. But the elimination of such a possibility is a matter that should be discussed separately, alongside the mechanisms necessary to achieve such a goal.

Further, I think it has been made clear from the very beginning of this introductory chapter that the scope of this book is limited to the Iranian experience. Twelver Shīʿism, like many religions, is transnational in nature, and not only have seminaries historically not acted in accordance with the logic of national borders, but the influence and authority of Shīʿī religious authorities have never been limited to the geographical framework of the modern nation-state. Therefore, the discussion in this book about the political theology of the Twelver Shīʿa, including the concept of theocratic secularism, may well be applied to Shīʿa in other countries, such as Iraq, Bahrain, and Lebanon. But the case of my research in this book is limited to Iran.

A further matter relates to the nature of the sources used in this work. Many of my sources have not been translated into English; a significant number only exist in Persian and/or Arabic. There are some cases in which an English translation exists, but I generally prefer to use original sources where possible. In reference lists that include titles of books and articles in other languages, it is customary to present such titles using the Latin alphabet exclusively. Instead, I have taken a new and somewhat unorthodox approach in the sense that I present the original Persian and Arabic versions of titles alongside their English translations. In my opinion, readers who are not familiar with Persian and Arabic derive little benefit from Latin transliterations of titles, while titles in Persian and Arabic will be

[58] Bhargava 2010, 69.

very useful for readers who are familiar with these languages. Transliterations are produced in different ways and are rarely free from error, but the method I have used in my bibliographies will enable the reader to easily and accurately identify the titles of all cited sources in his or her own language.

Where I do use transliterations in the text of this book, I make use of the guidelines proposed in the third edition of Brill's *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, which provides a more systematic and comprehensive system than other systems used in the field of Islamic studies. That being said, I must explain that in part II of the book, I generally refrain from using transliterated versions of names and concepts. This decision is due to the fact that many Iranian names as well as the Persian and Arabic words used in part II of the book have been used frequently and are well established in the English literature in their simple forms. For this reason, the use of transliteration in such cases is more likely to confuse than help the reader seeking to understand the name correctly. For example, a reader may well recognize the common and accepted spelling of the name "Khomeini" but find it strange and perplexing if this name were transcribed in the standard Brill style as "Khumaynī." The word "Ayatollah" is another example of a term that when presented in conformance with the Brill guidelines as "Āyatullāh," is unlikely to make the text any easier to read. Therefore, in part II of the book, in which names and concepts are more embedded in the English literature, transliteration has been used sparingly.